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NEWPORT

BY

W. C. BROWNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY

W. S. VANDERBILT ALLEN

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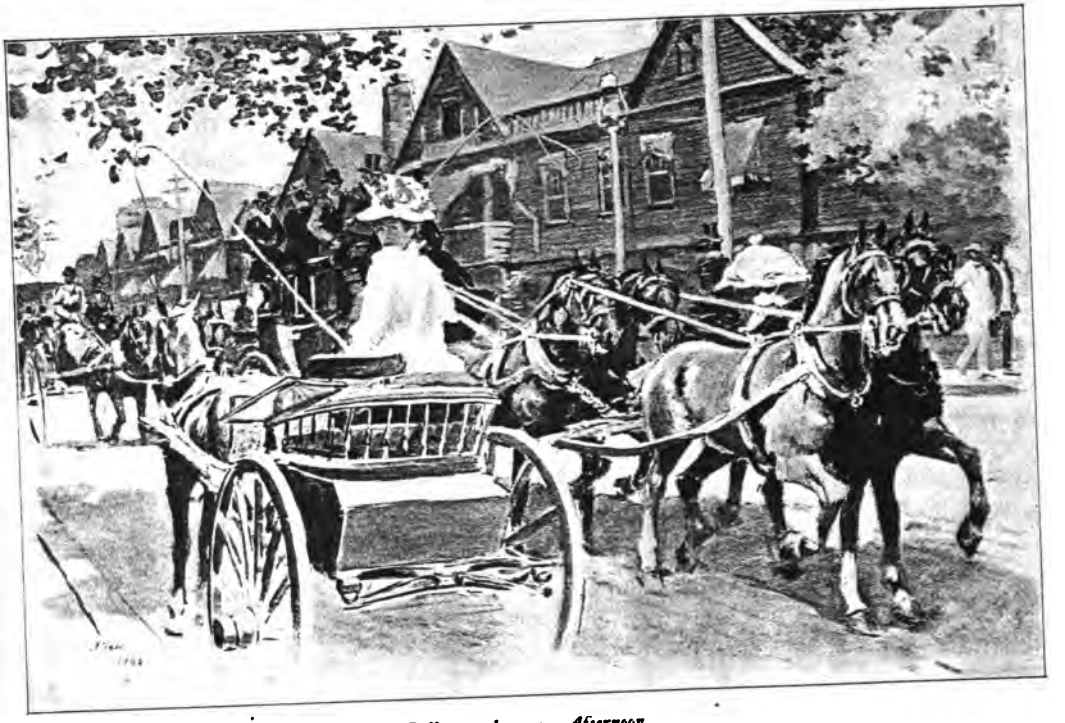

Bellevue Avenue—Afternoon

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JAMESTOWN
HARBOR
Harrison Ave
Carrol Ave
Bellevue Ave
Ocean Ave
Ocean Ave
Harrison Ave
CASTLE HILL
THE NECK
Cliffs
N
ATLANTIC OCEAN

NEWPORT

I

THE STAGE AND THE SPECTACLE

A beneficent fairy of æsthetic predilections could not have arranged a composition containing more efficient contrast and balance than Newport presents in its combination of old and new, of the quaint and the elegant, picturesqueness and culture. Nowhere else does fashion rest with such feathery lightness on such a solid pedestal. The mundane extravagance gains immensely by being related, seemingly at least and as to ocular setting, to a background of natural beauty and grave decorum.

The background gains a little, too. The people that inhabit it, addicted as they are to observant criticism of "sum-

mer visitors," nevertheless receive an electric fillip from their contact with what is gay and joyous and no doubt fleeting. In spite of their most conscientious efforts they are affected in a way that broadens their horizon in proportion as it sharpens their critical faculties. They "size up" the brilliant butterflies that but hover about the lovely town a few brief months of the year, and in rather remorseless fashion; but they are justifiably if secretly proud of their opportunities for doing so. What other city with any pretensions to be a watering-place has any such chance?

The whole town is in consequence visibly braced up. The clerks in the shops along Thames Street betray the influence in their deportment. A higher standard of manners than would otherwise obtain is universally apparent. School-children, even, treat each other with noticeably more decorousness than elsewhere. The comedy of society, in fact, is repeated, in infinite and often humorous trituration. But the result is pleasant. The hack-

drivers are, socially considered, poseurs. They crack jokes with their fares if they divine responsiveness, but their self-respect is still more obvious than their companionability; the "old Newporter" is not above showing the place to a party of negro visitors whom he drives down the Avenue with conspicuous good-humor, but it is his good-humor that is the most striking element of the spectacle. Even in such extreme instances one perceives the effect of the social ideal due to the "summer visitor."

The Stage and the Spectacle

On the other hand, an impartial chronicle must admit that the moral effect of a foreign body of wealth, leisure, and measurable frivolity in an environment of thrifty commonplace, such as indigenous Newport for the most part is, has its weak side. Brought up in more or less close contact with, and at any rate constant sight of, the attractive activities of so much irresponsible wealth, the strictly Newport people—who once constituted a very honorable and peculiarly self-respecting

community—have suffered a sensible demoralization. Not "hatred" nor "uncharitableness" has been the result of this contact with superior forces, but certainly "envy" has had a subtle influence, with the result that "Newport" has come to mean less to them and to others. The town is still—and may be in the future still more—an interesting place to speculate about as a New England town of excellent traditions and unequalled attractions, but unquestionably it has lost something of its once very positive character through contact with ideals and examples by no means its own. Among the shop-keepers—especially among those whom recent changes in "business methods" have rather relegated to the business background—and among the householders on the streets leading from Thames Street to what used to be called "the Hill," I am sure one would find an echo of such a judgment.

At first sight and to those who take but a perfunctory view of Newport this may

An Afternoon Spin

seem of slight importance. But to my own mind that which makes Newport what it is, is the balance hitherto maintained between a self-respecting, organic, and permanent community and the artificial, decorative, and more or less transitory element that makes it our chief watering-place. If the latter of these forces withdraws into exclusiveness, which to anyone who knows its composition may easily seem ridiculous, but which may nevertheless occur; or if the former declines into vulgarity and the loss of self-respect involved in the bravado of self-assertion, to which constant envy of what is quite beyond one's reach indubitably may lead, Newport as we know it now and have known it for years will certainly suffer a sea change. In other words, the future of Newport is, one must admit, considerably complicated by the peril of snobbishness, and snobbishness of both varieties exemplified by the Anglo-Saxon race. The English snob, according to an acute observer, meanly admires what is above him,

The Stage and the Spectacle

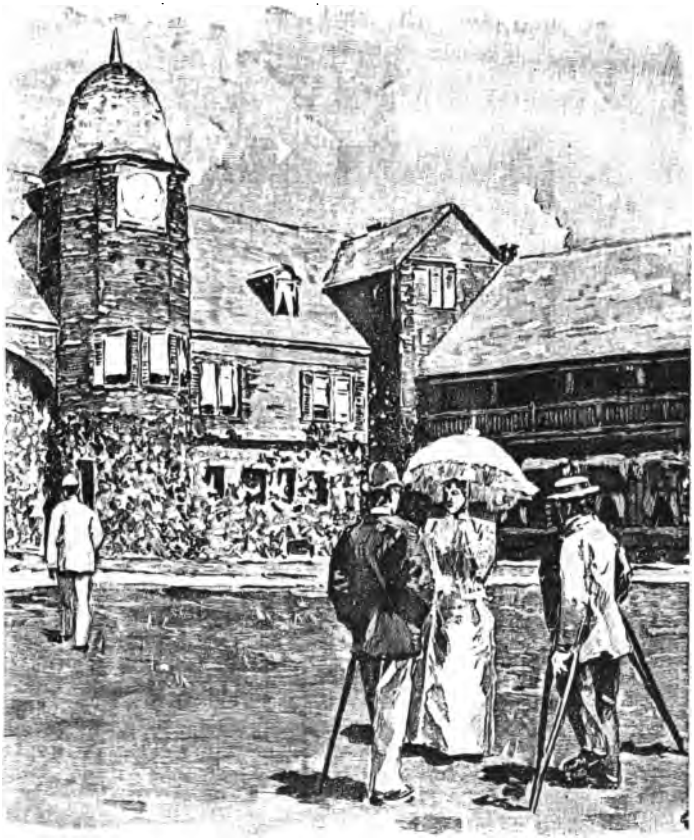
the American meanly despises what is beneath him. Newport undoubtedly has its full share of both species, but it has also, I think, the unusual advantage of sincerely attaching both to it, with the consequent prospect of circumventing each of them.

The place is supposed to owe its growth and eminence to the summer residents. It really owes these to four persons—all of them indigenous. They would nowadays be called "the Big Four." Without their foresight and realization of its potentialities, the city would still be what it was before the war, when its summer life was almost altogether a desultory and caravansary affair. It owes them, indeed, more or less indirectly, the summer residents themselves. Without their labor of preparation and seduction, opening streets and drives, modelling estates out of barren tracts, artistically cutting up the landscape into attractive lots, stimulating civic improvements, making known and visually exhibiting the immense attractiveness of

the place to everyone who had taste and money, Newport would have been to-day far different in almost every trait that now makes it "Newport." They found their account in the process, of course. They were or became capitalists in the course of advancing the interests and widening the prospects of the town. And, naturally, they are now forgotten. I need mention but one of them; but anyone who knows Newport well, or at least anyone who has known it as I have for upwards of thirty years, will appreciate what I mean to intimate in querying what the city would now be had it not been for the intelligence and enlightened enthusiasm of the late Alfred Smith, a man of ideas and imagination which, applied to anything more tangible and determinate than the gradual evolution of the first watering-place in this country, would have given him a national reputation. One needs but a passing reflection upon the imagination and ideas of our American "smart set" to assure him whether or no it is likely that unassisted

it would have hit upon the real Eden of America wherein to erect its "barbarian castles" and display its varied and leisurely activities.

The summer residents do not all belong to the "smart set," it is needless to say. Indeed, I doubt if any watering-place in the world of anything like equal eminence has a summer population characterized by so much elegance and refinement. There was long ago a large nucleus of elegance and refinement in Newport, and it has since grown proportionately with the increase of those whom envy and emulation have gathered around it; but certainly for these latter the way was made easy and its advantages indicated by the enterprise, energy, and enthusiasm of the men I have alluded to. Somewhat mixed the summer population now undoubtedly is. It has grown so large as to have grades and classes of its own. And to judge from the newspapers, which scrupulously record its doings, it has posses-



The Casino Quadrangle—Morning

sion of the town from June to October. It has certainly worked a great change in the summer life of the place.

The Stage and the Spectacle

This was always artificial and exotic, and always delightfully so. But the rise and immensely increased number of great fortunes have worked changes in Newport as they have everywhere else. Less here, however, than elsewhere, I am inclined to think, and certainly less here than is generally supposed. It is a commonplace that the hotels have been supplanted by the cottages. The Ocean House survives somewhat as a landmark and a reminiscence, but in obvious isolation. You can no longer sit on its broad piazza and watch with interest the serried defile of equipages—almost all of them readily to be identified. The Atlantic, the Fillmore, and the Bellevue are only memories, though to anyone who knew them even in their decadence and when they no longer harbored Southern folk and Southern manners with all the gayety and light-hearted camaraderie, characteristically Southern,

they are charming memories still. Can it be that the hotel life of Narragansett Pier, for example, is a fair reproduction of its old-time Newport analogue? But this is a question of only speculative interest. As a matter of fact, hotel life has disappeared in Newport.

What is curious, however, I think, is that so few people are alive to the fact that cottage life is just as feasible for persons of modest means. People go to Jamestown, on Conanicut Island, every summer and live in the hotels that have magically sprung up there at prices which would more than enable them to live in Newport cottages. Tastes differ proverbially, and I can fancy—for I have even met—people who preferred a Jamestown barrack to a Newport cottage at the same price, maintaining that the life was freer in Jamestown. I dare say it is; it is freer still at Asbury Park, N. J. Costume and manners may both be legitimately more négligés than would be quite seemly in a denser population and amid surroundings

that suggest more decorum. But there are persons to whom a certain degree of decorum is in itself pleasant to witness and practise, and to these life in Newport during the season may be as simple as it is in a village. To such persons the only obstacle to enjoyment is the constant presence of an elaborate and expensive life which they cannot share. This has capacities for making the envious and the feeble-minded, people who have no pride of tradition or shrewdness of philosophy or instinctive fastidiousness, extremely unhappy, no doubt. For others with small means the advantages of Newport are unequalled. The markets seem high-priced, especially to a New Yorker, but they are much more than counter-balanced by the low rents; and the conveniences obtainable at low rentals, due to the way in which cottage-building has been speculatively overdone, are unexampled. Bathing, rowing, sailing, driving, walking, picnicking are to be had in perfection, under a sky of infinite delicacy, in an atmosphere

of unique softness, and in an environment of natural beauty and artistic distinction that exists nowhere else.

Then there is the passing show—the social spectacle. The social spectacle as well as the summer life has greatly changed of recent years. Opening the Ocean Drive from the end of the Avenue to the Fort made a great difference to it. Ten miles more of macadam prodigiously disseminated the stately procession that used to pass decorously up and down the Avenue, turning at Bailey's Beach and at Kay Street where the houses ceased. Though the procession is much augmented nowadays it no longer produces the same effect as formerly, and has, indeed, ceased to be a procession; the "establishments," as they used to be called, are strung along without cumulative effect. And owing to their greater number no one knows and can gossip about more than one in three of them. "Newport" seems less condensed in consequence. Its old lovers feel a certain lack.

The procession's smartness, too (an epithet, by the way, we should not have thought of using twenty years ago), is now deeply infiltrated by plebeian elements—Stewart's, Hazard's, and other so-called "drags," with their mammoth loads of excursionists anxiously curious to see and fix in the memory the mansions they have read about in the Sunday papers, and also frequently recurrent vehicles of the ultra-shirt-sleeved *bourgeoisie* of the town itself, in whom the desire of parade has altogether outrun the capacity of creditably attaining it. These new elements "have a good time," in our American idiom, and certainly no place in our democratic country, not even Newport, can consistently elevate any ideal above that of providing people in general with a good time at any cost to the æsthetic or other sensibilities of "the remnant." Only, a *laudator temporis acti* in thinking of Newport may, perhaps, without feeling quite a snob, make the reflection that the present situation is the result of artificial rather than of natural selection.

This overlay of *nouvelles couches* is obvious elsewhere than in the driving procession, of course, with the result of social and political rather than æsthetic cheer to the spectator. The accursed but convenient trolley system clangs and sizzes through erstwhile sedate Spring Street and out the wide expanse of elm-lined Broad Street, now characteristically become Broadway. The colored population has increased after its prolific racial fashion, and the anomaly of a barouche full of darky dandies and dusky belles conducted by an Irish, or even, as I have before mentioned, a native Newport driver, is a frequent phenomenon. The appalling excursionist from Providence and Pawtucket, with his and her paper bags and odor of peanuts and ginger-pop, infests the squares, the cliffs, the beach, and awakens echoes with enjoyment. The Irish contingent has augmented proportionally with the African. The city government is largely in its hands, with perhaps the usual consequence of its own

Exercising the Thoroughbreds

prosperity and a deterioration of public works in general. There are larger crowds of expectorating loafers around the Post-office and the City Hall. The commercial traveller, with his samples and his manners, is more numerous. In fine, the city is no longer, to the eye as well as in fact, composed of a summer aristocracy and a resident *bourgeoisie*, their self-respecting admirers. It has moved with the rest of the world and with similar results. But with all its changes, which the dilettante or the lover of old Newport may deplore, it is perhaps more pre-eminently than ever the loveliest, the serenest and most smiling, the most obviously cultivated civic *ensemble* that the country possesses.

The Stage and the Spectacle

II

THE SUMMER LIFE

THE quality of the summer life is its elegance; its defect is its artificiality. It is undoubtedly elegant, but its elegance is not quite a natural evolution. It is surrounded with ease, comfort and distinction not merely material, but æsthetic. Its stage is carpeted with the loveliest of lawns and decorated with the greatest profusion of flowers anywhere to be seen. It is characterized by a great deal of high-breeding, of decorum triumphing over frivolity, of taste, reserve and composure. A large element of it certainly is superior to the envious fleering or the obsequious flattery of vulgarity. Its self-respect is perfectly obvious and real. But one would like to see this carried a little farther, to the point, I mean, of unconsciousness, of absolute free play. Self-respect is admir-

The Ball-room of the Casino

able, but respect for one's traditions is admirable also. The Newport summer life has traditions, and it should not abandon them in the chameleon-like way characteristic of it, and appear imitative and artificial. It is only comparatively new, and yet, by its rather systematic imitation of what is positively old—by its studied modelling of itself on English country life, with which it really has but the most superficial relations in the world—it creates the effect of a reflection and not of an original. In English country life the flowers make no such display, it is true, but the lawns are deeper and richer, the houses have infinitely older associations, and the entire environment is infinitely more established and sedate. Why abandon our own heritage of vivacity and high-spirited decorousness in favor of an exotic ideal? Anglomania is, perhaps, not conspicuous in Newport, certainly not in comparison with the rest of the East; but in Newport it is less excusable than elsewhere, and its effects more regrettable

accordingly: in Newport more than anywhere else with us imitation by the new thing of the old, failure to insist on one's own idiosyncrasies, and, as Arnold says of ritualistic practices, "vehement adoption of rites till yesterday unknown," seem to imply that we do not "know a good thing when we see it."

So great, however, is the unifying power of Newport that when its summer life appears in any concrete manifestation one feels that to inquire into it is eminently to inquire too curiously. It is true that with the extension of the drive, the decline of the hotel-life and their withdrawal from the beach, the summer people are certainly less in evidence than they were formerly. They make far less of a spectacle for profane contemplation, and somewhat consciously and uneasily, perhaps, study exclusiveness, if not seclusion. They visit among themselves and have teas and dinners to themselves, quite as they do in their several winter social circles. It is perfectly clear that they do not have any-

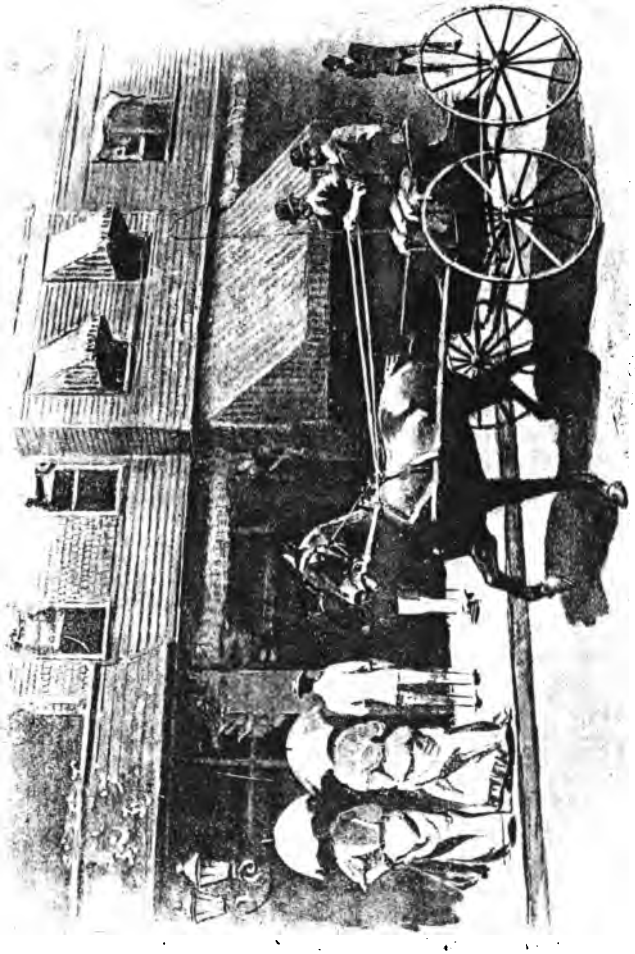
thing like the good time they or their fathers and mothers used to have; but that is their affair, and is only interesting as it affects and modifies "Newport."

They still come out quite strong—as they are beginning to learn to say—at the Casino; though the Casino has never paid for itself and is a monument to the unwisdom of its originators' efforts to domesticate an essentially foreign institution. It embodies the transplanted fancies of the staid burghers of Holland in conjunction with the predilections of the lawn-loving Englishman, and includes a restaurant more or less reminiscent of France. But it has been found to be unduly costly and adjudged to have "forced the note." Yet it has weekly concerts and dances which at all events the outer fringe of the society people do not hesitate to attend and participate in, and it witnesses one festival in the year to which they contribute their presence with the utmost cordiality—the annual lawn-tennis tournament.

There are probably few prettier scenes

than that of which this contest is the centre. Perfectly trimmed lawns swept by the freshest and daintiest morning dresses, young men in flannels, rosy with health and irresponsibility, fashion in its freest and least conscious manifestations, the mass of "best people" in their most attractive inadvertence, the rising seats around the courts clad in the most refreshing variety of clear-colored costumes pricked out with patches of brilliant parasols, the water-color note everywhere, as a painter would say, and the well-groomed young fellows in the centre of the composition obviously exhibiting both strength and skill—make a picture which for combined animation and refinement, both of actors and spectators, it would be difficult to match anywhere. Jean Béraud—or better still Raffaelli or Forain—would find it quite as well worth fixing as Longchamp, though the types, of course, are less various.

Newport owes, too, to the summer resident, not only a high standard of social



In Front of the Casino

life and a decorous employment of leisure, but also an æsthetic ideal of architecture and landscape gardening. Architecture has perhaps been as much travestied as illustrated. The feeblest whimsies abound. Reflections in frame of reverend stone *motifs* are not infrequent. The art of building is often caricatured in houses of which the only inspiration is plainly the desire to be conspicuous. And though some of the old houses, such as the Bareda mansion and Mr. Wetmore's palace, are their own excuse for being, there are not a few elaborate examples of exaggerated bad taste and worse grammar. On the other hand, to leave the Vanderbilt and other palaces quite aside, such a house as Richardson built for Mr. Sherman, or that of Mr. Marquand by Hunt, and others easily mentioned, form a notable leaven and rectify the effect produced by perhaps the predominant inapposite sportiveness.

But there is no doubt at all of the immense service to the place rendered by the summer resident's landscape gardener, who

Newport has covered broad acres of it with lawns and boscages, clumps of trees and bushes, heaps of flowery luxuriance walled in by privet and buckthorn, and has more than any other agency, except the climate and the natural lay of the land, exhibited the potentialities of elegance inherent in these latter. A good word should be said, in addition, for the way in which—often an awkward and somewhat absurd instrument in the hands of Providence—the summer resident has circumvented the purely utilitarian and ignoble activities that, left to themselves, would have done their disastrous utmost to vulgarize Newport, wholly and deplorably unconscious that the life of the goose that lays for them such golden eggs was really in peril.

III

THE OLD TOWN

THE old town may be called picturesque in distinction from the general pictorial effect that is noticeable. It is full of narrow streets and quaint turnings; little squares left undisturbed by the march of municipal improvements within their old-time staid and rectilinear demarcation; trapezoidal houses built originally, it is evident, in exemplification of the sound principle that expression of function is the one thing needful in architecture; gently inclining gambrels in themselves a a composition. But even its streets and houses, its courts, *impasses*, and docks have as detail too much character and individual sap justly to be termed the mere material of a picturesque whole. They have none of the indeterminate and huddled look of the detail of Amalfi or

Assisi. They make a harmony that is sensibly organic. They are individually quaint now and then, without, however, the sharp accent that we usually associate with quaintness, and they fit the landscape "like the paper on the wall." Some of the narrow gambrel-roofed houses have gables that gaze on the streets, on which they often look, like human faces. Cotton's Court, Wanton Avenue, and similar places, contracted as they evidently are in area, have an air of complication and variety that tempt and would reward the exploring sense. Curious juxtapositions of shop, dwelling, stable, warehouse, and what not form incomparable "nooks."

The public buildings are interesting. The City Hall, admired by Allston, is a charming bit of classic, and the State House a colonial monument of much dignity and character. The jail, on Marlborough Street, is absolutely delightful and characteristically domestic; there is a legend of its one prisoner once complaining because there was no lock on her door.

In all the world probably there is nothing like the Long Wharf, with its succession of boat-builders' shops, tenements, ignoble saloons, heaps of junk, sail-boat moorings and floats, terminating in the railway freight station and the steamboat wharf. It is hardly changed within my own recollection. Deacon Groff's succession to James Hart, the boat-builder and letter, in whose airy shop a parliament of local sages meets now as it has for several decades, amid the shavings and spars, the oars and "tackle," to look out over the harbor and speculate on the political state of the nation and the social state of the town, is the chief variation I note, and that is not revolutionary. On the hottest day there is always a breeze here, and much to be learned besides.

Nor is there anything, I fancy, quite like Thames Street from end to end—the business street of the town—though its banks and butcher-shops, and book-stores and fish-markets, and hardware and dry-goods and haberdashery are punctuated

and faintly diversified with dwellings now and then. They have been dwellings a long while, and count many generations of probably the same families. The subdued note of age, of "silence and slow time," is distinctly audible, and vibrates gently throughout the old town, with its gray and white and green blinds; but I must admit that of recent years there has been to some extent an intrusive discord of commercial modernity even here. The one-price clothing store, the bee-hives of humming retail industry, and the universal emporium are foreign bodies in the general environment and contribute a foreign color to the quaint old street—like an overflow of Fall River or Providence. But as yet they have not greatly detracted from the general character of the thoroughfare, which is still sufficient to afford one of the most piquant contrasts in the world, I think, when the drags and dog-carts, the broughams and phaetons of fashion weave their way along its narrow length at what it pleases everyone's hu-

An Old Revolutionary House

morous fancy to call the shopping hour. Thames Street, whatever its transformations, will indefinitely, no doubt, continue to perform its distinguished function of binding together summer and winter, transitory and permanent Newport with a notable welding force.

The Old Town

The Point, too, is a part of the old town, and is rather neglected, which it should not be. It is somewhat inaccessible, and anyone who lives there or inhabits the neighborhood for a summer has need, perhaps, of a horse and trap of some kind. But it has its advantages and qualities of its own. To begin with, it is very far removed from the artificial summer life. One may live there as much in retreat as at Jamestown. Land is very cheap, and if I were tempted to "build" in Newport I am not at all sure that I should not select some site on the water's edge in this region. One could have his fill of still-water bathing, his cat-boat and row-boat, and a certain measure of seclusion wholly consonant with the most delightful out-

of-doors activity and within easy reach of whatever is attractive in the town itself. A more nearly perfect embodiment of *rus in urbe* it would be difficult to find than the stretch of bay shore here, fringed by substantial houses, and an equally substantial local community that is in Newport but not, in the ordinary and superficial sense, of it.

The Avenue, the Cliff Walk and the Drive

IV

THE AVENUE, THE CLIFF WALK AND THE DRIVE

NEWPORT is longitudinally divided by three main streets which run north and south. Following mainly the harbor line and projecting thitherward its many slips is Thames Street, where is almost all the business of the town, extending from the cemetery, with its characteristic contrast of old and new, the old slate carvings of winged cherubs' heads hard by the joint product of La Farge and St. Gaudens, to the lower end of the harbor. A few rods up the hill Spring Street, with its prim houses and old Trinity and other churches, parallels it, running from just above the Parade or Mall, where the State House is south to the ocean. And on the crest of the ridge are the nearly straight two miles and a half of Bellevue Avenue. At its

north end is the romantic and trimly kept Jews' Cemetery, celebrated by Longfellow, where sleep amid flowers and cypresses Abraham and Judah Touro and other Hebrews, who amply repaid the early toleration and respect here extended to their race long before it received them elsewhere. Next come residences, boarding-houses, a little row of lesser commerce, the Newport Reading-room—the club euphemistically so called—the Redwood Library, now a more hushed but less hospitable bookish retreat than many old Newporters remember it, and Touro Park, where the Old Stone Mill stands and a band plays on summer evenings. Then a stretch of shops till one gets to Bath Road, the broad street leading to the beach, the Casino, and the stiff, stark caravansery of the Ocean House just beyond.

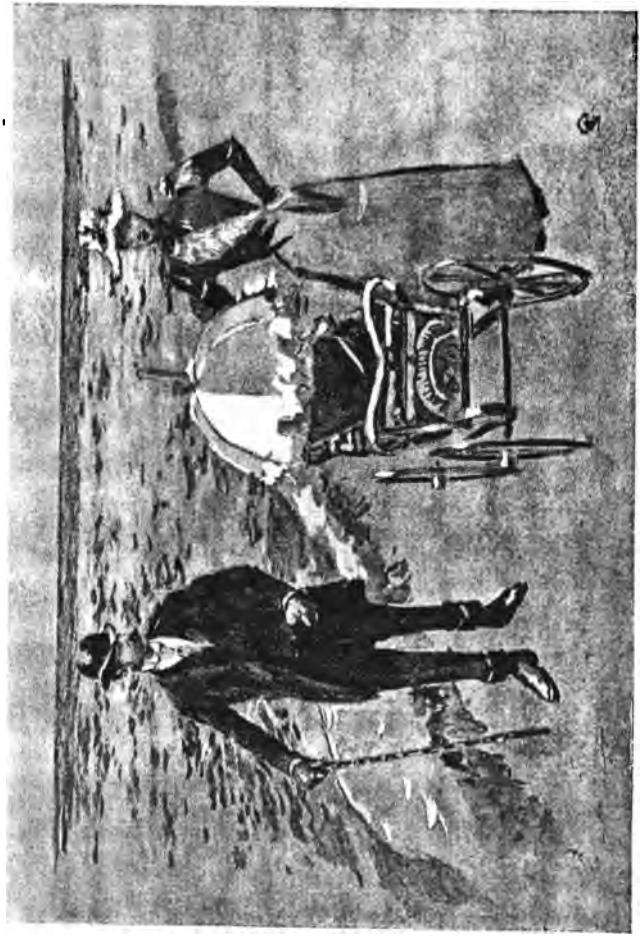
Here begins the succession of cottages and châteaux of the summer resident, set wide apart in elegant lawns bordered with hedges and blazing with flowers, that extends for a couple of miles to the sea.

And the slope that shelves gently eastward from the crest of the hill that the Avenue follows has also within the past few lustra (especially in the neighborhood of Ochre Point) been covered with elaborate mansions, the average of whose pretensions exceeds perhaps that of those appertaining to the Avenue itself. This is the region —the rough parallelogram formed by the Avenue, the cliffs bordering the sea a half mile or so to the east, the southern shore, and an east and west line from about the Ocean House to a point a little south of the Beach—where chiefly reside the summer people whose activities the papers chronicle so copiously, and where, better perhaps than anywhere else, an American may see his "young [and old] barbarians all at play"—to recall Arnold's application of the line to Oxford. The northeastern part of the city has grown greatly also of recent years, and is covered with cottages of modest cost and considerable architectural character. Past the Beach is another district whose houses, some of them ample

The Avenue, the Cliff Walk and the Drive

and elaborate, stand in notable isolation amid rural fields, then Paradise with its farm-houses, ponds, junipers and gray rocks, the Second Beach, and finally Sachuest Point, which brings one to the Seaconnet River and the verge of Newport.

All around here and north from the town proper delightful drives lead out into the island itself. Six miles out is the Glen, an almost artificial arrangement of romantic nature, driving whither one may stop at Mrs. Durfee's for tea and waffles, and enjoy a truly English interior. Then there are Pebbly Beach, with its curious geological conformations, and romantically situated, cool and cosey St. Mary's Chapel, and Vaucluse and its deserted close, eloquent in reflections such as Mr. Swinburne has crystallized in his incomparable "A Forsaken Garden;" and no end of quaint cross-roads and long vistas beneath overhanging elms or between trim poplars—the whole greatly vivified and highly colored by the local inhabitant, with his sturdy and salient



On the Cliffs

characteristics, lounging in front of country stores and post-offices, or jogging past in his open wagon, smiling the while, with good-natured cynicism, at any exuberance you and your party may exhibit.

The Avenue, the Cliff Walk and the Drive

To go back to the town itself, there are, to begin with, the two miles and more of the Cliff Walk. Setting out from the Beach the sea is on one's left, its near shallows, "with green and yellow seaweed strewn," and beyond its stretch of varying blues and purples, the long, graceful reach of Easton's Point, at the end of which a solitary cottage stands sentinel, and shimmering in the more distant haze the shore of Seaconnet and its neighboring rocky islets around which the breakers are flashing in foam. On the right of the path, which undulates along its edges and rises and falls with its rolling unevenness, extends that succession of lawns which, more than any other feature perhaps, sets the pitch of Newport's elegance.

In these smooth expanses of soft green glowing with unexampled profusion of

aristocratic flowers, the art and nature of the place meet in effective fusion. So elegant is it all that one fails to note how high and rugged are the cliffs themselves, the highest on the Atlantic coast from Cape Ann to Yucatan. On a day of storm, with the waves driving in from the ocean and beating angrily against them, they are more impressive; but they are always picturesque and make a striking dividing line between the sea, wherein the forces of nature are always visibly at play, peaceful or turbulent, and the broad shelf of land which the hand of man has moulded and decorated with the most cultivated art. Curious, is it not, that certain proprietors of the villas to which these lawns appertain should have tried by every means to circumvent the undoubted riparian right of all the world to follow this unequalled path at its will, provided trespass be avoided? They are newcomers, one infers, to Newport at any rate, if not to *id omne genus*, for a prolonged submission to Newport influences could

hardly fail to modify the Hyrcanian hearts and Bœotian brains to which in such circumstances as these monopoly could suggest itself.

The Avenue, the Cliff Walk and the Drive

Beyond the southern extremity of the Cliff Walk, and extending westward to Castle Hill (whence one may see the fringe of hotels and cottages that compose Narragansett Pier) and Fort Adams, stretches out the charming region known of old as Price's Neck—variegated with ponds and embayments, hill and dale, rock and marsh, and skirted and reticulated with the famous Ocean Drive and its tributaries. The Ocean Drive is unique in the world; and to my own taste its mingling of stimulus and suavity, its alternations of wildness and culture, its invigorating iodine-laden breezes, the sedative softness of its mists, the piquant aroma of its huckleberry bushes, the infinite variety of its "effects," combine to produce an impression to which that left by the Cornice from Nice to Genoa is a shade saccharine and monotonous. This and the

Paradise country are the regions that appeal most, perhaps, to the few landscape painters who have had the sense to appreciate that in Newport they had but to reproduce, whereas elsewhere the heavy burthen of origination is generally laid upon them. Mr. La Farge is a notable exception, by the way; and curiously, thus, it is the most imaginative of our painters who, almost alone, has illustrated the most pictorial landscape that we have.

The Neck has been greatly changed within the last few years, and some fastidious spirits who are displeased with any intrusion of man into the realm of nature have esteemed it "destroyed." It has been cut up by a network of roads, it is true. It is no longer Rocky Farm, with its happy combination of wildness and composure, its sudden bush and brier-clad declivities, its stretches of marsh, and wide vistas of uneven but undulating grace. It is shorn into cultivated aspect, and graded into landscape art. The landscape painter has, perhaps, a legitimate re-

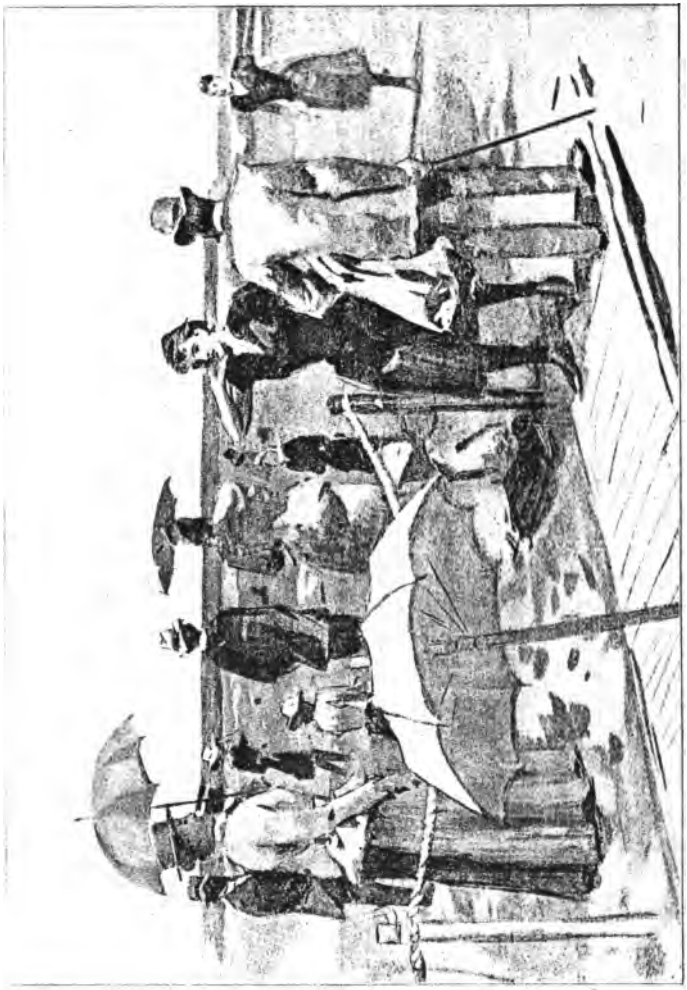
regret. But the nicest and most sympathetic taste has dictated the process, and the lay of the ground and its character as a whole have been carefully considered. The geologic outline has been preserved, and even its accidents have been appreciated as advantages instead of artificially circumvented. It has not lost its effect of local *ensemble*, and the houses—the castles, rather—now stationed on its crests and dominating the points of view do not detract from this effect, but on the other hand, contribute to it an element of distinctly elegant interest. The change, at all events, is at the charge of the summer residents. To me, I confess, it is to be charged to their credit.

The Avenue, the Cliff Walk and the Drive

V

THE BEACH

ANOTHER effect of the evolution of the summer resident as an important and controlling class has been the transformation—I was about to say the destruction—of the Beach. The Beach is no longer what it used to be. The "bathing hour," with all its characteristic features, has departed. You may bathe at any hour when you can find a "house," but it is no longer fashionable to bathe at all. There are a few private houses sometimes occupied, and at Bailey's Beach others whose owners use them very constantly, but the bathing at the Beach as a feature of social summer life is over. The carriages do not come down and draw up on the sand to watch the bathers. The place is no longer a rendezvous both for bathers and spectators, as, say, the *plage* at Trouville is.



Scene on the Beach

"Society" has abandoned it, and in general, probably, confines itself to "tubbing." *The Beach*

The philosophic lover of Newport must recognize the change as inevitable, no doubt, but the sentimentalist may be permitted to regret it. Perhaps it would have been asking too much of the summer people, to preserve in this respect the simplicity and really democratic elegance which they evinced before they became consciously so much of a force as to be uneasily careful with regard to even chance companionship. And it must be confessed that of late years the Beach has been invaded by people with whom fastidiousness may excusably find it disagreeable to mingle. On Sundays it is given over to excursionists and servants, as was quite to have been expected, of course, with the increase of Newport's general popularity and its facilities of access by rail and water. But even on week-days it has "developed" immensely in a popular direction. "Pavilions" that recall Coney Island more than old Newport have arisen, and the

aroma of chowder pervades them. The travelling photographer sets up his shanty. Wrapping-paper abounds, and "lunches" are surreptitiously munched. The sunshine and salt air minister to the greatest good of the greatest number. Of the "best people" in general, only those who find the bathing hygienic or positively pleasurable, enter the water, and only their immediate friends attend and observe them.

Still I, for one, cannot help thinking that things might have been different but for the society fiat that bathing was to be considered unfashionable, and that the fiat itself rather unnecessarily preceded any real occasion for it. Certainly, were the natural advantages of the Beach appreciated as are those of European watering places whose summer population is both popular and select, they would be utilized instead of neglected. They are, as a matter of fact, unequalled. There is but one natural disadvantage; the Beach fronts southward, and after a storm gets more than its due proportion of seaweed; and

seaweed is a distinct discount upon the pleasure of bathing. Otherwise it is unrivalled. It is absolutely safe. It shelves in the gentlest gradation. The water is always warm. Even at high tide there is plenty of room for carriages. The dunes are high enough to afford protection from the wind when it happens to come from the north. It is a mile in extent and affords a driving promenade at low tide of almost unique exhilaration. The "scene" is invariably animating.

Indeed, it must not be supposed that in finding excuses for the "best people's" recent neglect, one really quite acquits them of stupidity in the matter—only, in speaking of most of their characteristic manifestations, one is naturally more interested in explaining them than in speculating about their intelligence and tact. There are plenty of people who bathe daily in the season at the Beach, and have done so, they and their fathers and mothers, for more seasons than most of the now prominent summer residents can

count, and who get along very well both without the old confraternity and with the new popular element, with whom visual association only is necessary, and that in general more interesting than disquieting. But, of course, the number of persons in any community whose breeding is sufficiently sound to give them a sense of security in such matters is comparatively limited, and however philosophic they are in this instance, I fancy they will welcome the formal social re-establishment of the Beach, even at the expense of the social differentiation by which alone perhaps this may have to be accomplished.

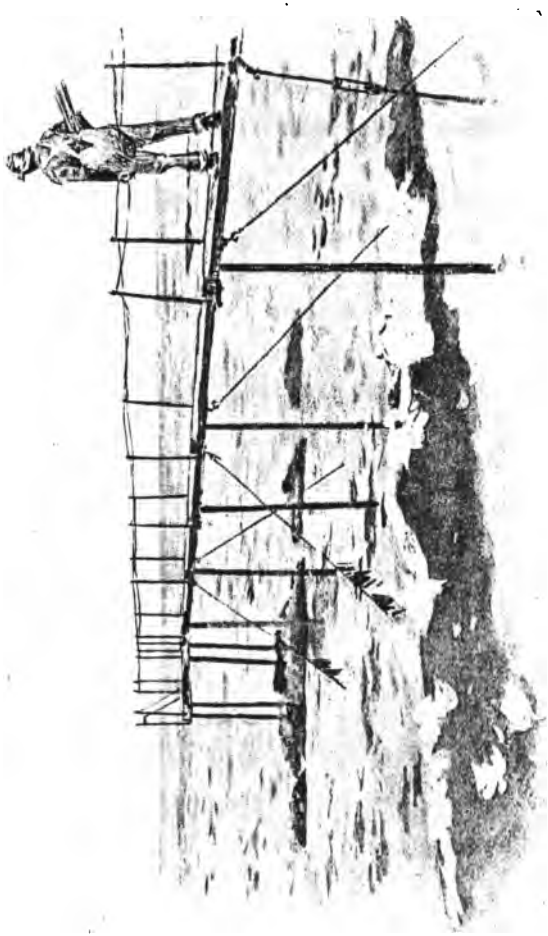
VI

THE CLIMATE AND THE LANDSCAPE

FOR rheumatic and respiratory maladies there are no doubt better climates than that of Newport, and there are others whose tonic properties are greater. But the Newport climate is balm to those manifold temperaments that are consciously or unconsciously threatened with any manner of nervous valetudinarianism. It is a poultice to the nerves, an anodyne to irritability, a sedative to excitement, and an assuagement of exhaustion. It not only performs the important function of keeping the skin moist, but it is balm to the tired mind. Arriving from New York in the early summer morning, the sensation of relaxed tension, of being swathed in soft salt dampness, of breathing the *primeur* of iodized air, is sybaritic. One proceeds to sleep like and long and often as a child. One

may almost speak of quaffing deep draughts of dreamless repose. And in ensuing days the blessedness of having fatigue assail only the physique and spare the faculties is unspeakable; one is tranquilly instead of feverishly alert.

There are "dog days," of course. From July 25th to September 1st exertion is profitless and energy misplaced. The fog that drifts in from the southeast and struggles with the sun, vainly in the morning and victoriously in the late afternoon, complicates abnormally any unusually high temperature. It does not last long and oftenest is condensed by the wind's shifting to northeast into cooling downpours that one enjoys from piazzas, the dripping trees and damp fragrance of everything having a distinctly tonic effect. And though it is in July and August that the lotos-eating, which the soft climate and insular atmosphere make an almost universal habit in Newport, most prevails; this is, as the French say, *un petit malheur*. The *segreto per esser felice* is not really in "a smiling



Bass-fishing Stand

mistress and a cup of Falernian"—it is, to anyone who has ever eaten of this ambrosia, in the lotos of Newport. More than anywhere else there are days here "always afternoon," days on which one may even with a sense of elation that exceeds that of virtue forget what elsewhere is duty. The most prosaic submit to the spell of the place. Everyone is physically lazy without suffering mental stagnation. A larger proportion of Newport boys return to the place of their nativity, probably, than is true of any other even New England town —drawn back, after no doubt often futile vicissitudes in the exterior world, by the loadstone of its subtle attractiveness. No one once inoculated with its serene and searching charm ever thoroughly recovers his independence, I think. His energy may be sapped by it, but his spirit is soothed and for him the battle of life is won by avoiding profitless engagements and tempering one's ambitions.

The Climate and the Landscape

But more potent even than the caressing climate in its effect on a delicately organ-

ized sensorium is the Newport landscape —its aristocratic lines, its elegant expanse, its confident high-bred air as it lies stretched out in the sunlight or yields itself to the soft enfolding of sea mist. I remember a Newport lady writing from Athens itself to her little nephew at home, "Don't you think it is a piece of good fortune to live in the most beautiful place in the world?" and share her sentiment. Everything is pictorial; every series of objects is an *ensemble;* the vista in any direction exceeds the interest of the purely picturesque—the picturesque with its crudity, its fortuitousness, its animated and uneasy helter-skelter. Nature here is conscious—by comparison with much of our American landscape, infinitely developed. She is elegant and reserved as well as suave, and smiles at one with patrician softness and delicate sympathy, as who should say, "To enjoy me depends a good deal on yourself."

At the crest of a yellow-green elevation, variegated with browns and shaded with cool grasses, the granite elbows itself grace-

fully out of the earth and warms itself in the moisture-tempered sunshine. A white clouds rests affectionately on it as you look up from the hollow, truly Titianesque in its depth of fulness. The sky at the horizon is a light blue, like a child's sash. Streaks of vapor are spun across the zenith, toward which the blue deepens into sapphire. The beach is white—white, however, over which every tint plays in opaline iridescence. Berkeley's rock stretches out purple, sage, and olive, toward the sea. The white sand dunes are crested with yellow sedge. Black rocks jut out on the sea horizon. The afternoon curtain of gray shadow gradually descends in front of the Purgatory ledge. Five or six dark dots of bathers (there is no "hour" for bathing at the Second Beach) move about in the ripple of the gently dissolving breakers. A wreath of children is running along the damp sand that fringes the ebb and flow, starting the sandpipers from tip-toeing into brief flight. Seaweed carts drawn by oxen and horses

are hauling away their dripping loads at the other end of the two-mile crescent. The clouds are violet at the north horizon and white overhead, and long, graceful lines of shore frame the ever-changing blue-green of the ocean on two sides of the triangle of which the sky forms the third. Back from the beach is "Paradise"—but indeed paradise is all around one.

Or take a July morning down at Bailey's Beach, at the end of the Avenue and the beginning of the Ocean Drive. The sun illumines every cranny of the rocks. Above them are slopes covered with bright-green, shiny huckleberry bushes, and beyond a little grove of artistically placed pine saplings. Over the hill is an elaborately picturesque house. Seaward the sand glistens and sparkles, wet from the spray, the water folding itself over it in narrow hems. The rocks are seamed and spongified and accented with gold-brown seaweed, and their own local color runs the gamut from brown with pinkish

tints to cool gray, from fawn and mauve to pearl. Above are the constant Titianesque clouds, overflowing with opaline effulgence. A bloom of gray Timothy furze rests on the deeper green of the splotches of grass. The varied blue and green of the water whose wimples are winking in the sun ranges from cobalt to malachite. Spouting Rock is booming melodiously nearby. A couple of six-year-olds in fresh light blue cambric dresses are climbing an adjoining acclivity, showing in delicate contrast of values against the green and gray hillside. Around all and unifying everything the moist Newport air tones and centralizes into a true picture the various objects that it makes contribute to a harmonious color composition.

What is especially characteristic of the Newport landscape is the co-operation it demands in the beholder's appreciation. It appeals to one's alertness, rather than to a lazy receptivity. You miss its quality entirely if your own faculties are not

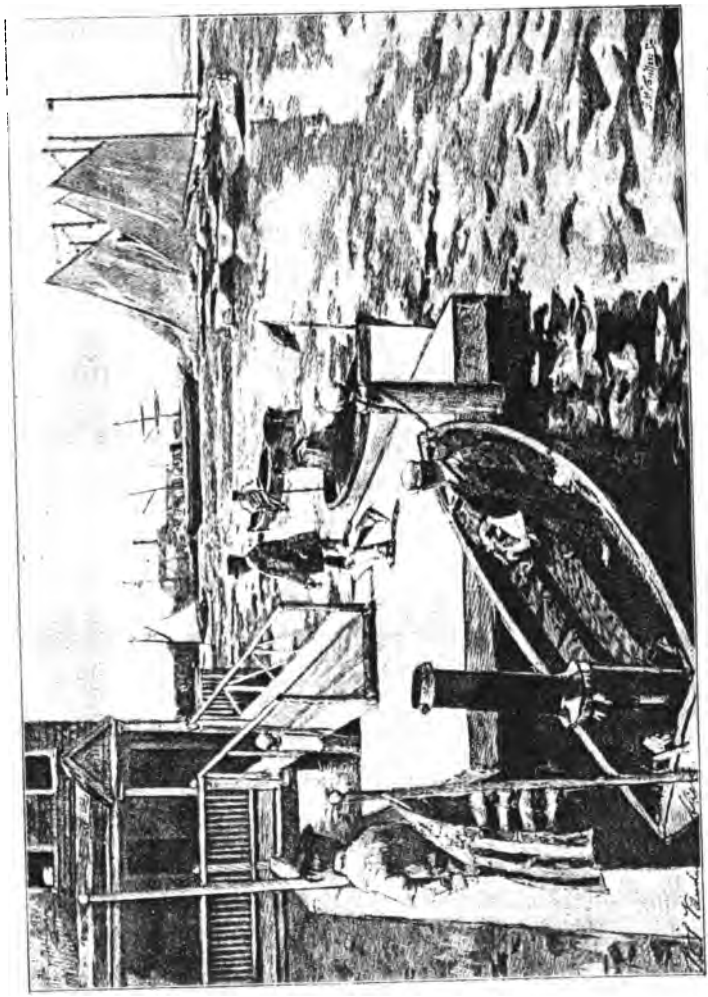
in a state of real activity. This does not exclude composure or imply excitement. There is nothing keyed up, nothing especially exhilarating in the soft air and suave prospect stretching out in every direction wherever one may be. Only still less is there any enervation, any relaxing somnolency inviting to the *far niente* state of the mind. One's soul is distinctly "invited," not soothed in any narcotic sense. The appeal of the place is to an intelligent rather than a purely sensuous appreciation. You know why you like it, why it charms and wins you, why, indeed, it takes a never-to-be-disengaged hold on the very fibre of your affections, why you remember and regret it on Lake Geneva, in Venice, in Sorrento, why and how, in a word, it is beautiful.

VII

THE HARBOR

NEWPORT Harbor is one of the best roadsteads in the world, being land-locked, easy of access, and having no bar. But its utilitarian advantages are slight in comparison with its æsthetic attractiveness. It is not merely one of the most, but, I think, from what I have heard and seen, the most beautiful of the world's harbors. Of course, such an opinion is largely a matter of taste, and a lover of Newport, so far from dissembling his partiality, is inclined to profess it. There are doubtless enchanting fjords in Norway, and reef-protected stretches of lovely purple water in the tropics; there are the Bay of Naples, whose beauties no amount of cockney admiration can render commonplace, and the blue reaches around the Piræus and Phalerum and Salamis. There are Con-

stantinople and the Golden Horn, and so on. So far as my own experience goes, the water view from the Athenian Acropolis gives one the nearest approach to the sensation produced by Newport Harbor. Arriving at the Piræus from Naples, the Italian drop-curtain seems to have lifted and disclosed a scene of natural beauty, in whose presence one's memory of the Vesuvian Bay is that of an exotic and artificial aspect. When the sensitive traveller awakes after a night on the Sound boat, now moored to Long Wharf, and notes the gradual unfolding of the placid prospect before him, as the summer sun comes up over the gray roofs and green trees of the town, and reveals the beautiful Rhode Island Harbor and its refined landscape environment, he feels, to be sure, that his eyes, which closed the night before on the actual world, are opening on the delectable phenomena of fairyland itself. Yet, the sense of contrast once overcome, the impression of the sense is curiously like that of the Athenian Harbor.



Yacht Club and Landing-Stage

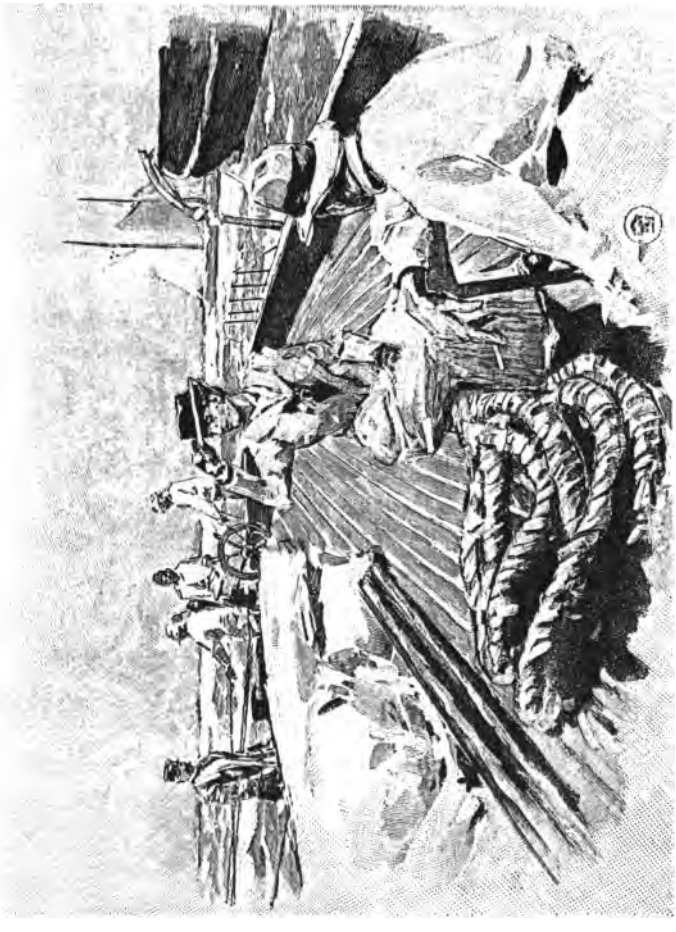
There is the same commingled softness and freshness, the same brilliancy combined with suavity of color, the same gray-green envelope thinly overlaying the same stony geologic structure, the same absence of tropicality on the one hand and presence of exquisiteness on the other.

The Harbor

Newport Harbor, however, is too actively characteristic for even the least fanciful comparisons. As day advances it becomes a busy as well as a beautiful scene. The wharves that jut out into it, covered with piles of lumber and (piquantly) heaps of junk, do not attest great commercial agitation. But the Conanicut ferry-boat issues at regular intervals from her slip, the Fort Adams and Torpedo Station and Coaster's Harbor launches ply back and forth, the Wickford and Narragansett Pier boats, and an ever-increasing number of excursion steamers from Providence, Bristol, Fall River, Rocky Point and Block Island churn their way among the yachts and trading-schooners at anchor; and the fleet

of cat-boats glides breezily hither and thither in all directions, but plainly without specific destination and following courses laid by the fancy of absolute leisure. The sense of life and activity is omnipresent. The air is salt and full of savor. Lobster-pot buoys bump against a passing keel and bob in its wake. Fishermen with short briar pipes and sou'westers lean lazily against the tillers of their boats coming in from "outside" laden with the day's catch. "Naphtha boats" spin along with incredible speed, puffing stertorously. Beyond Goat Island lies one—or two or five—of the White Squadron, spick-span in the sunlight. Up at Coaster's Harbor the boys are drilling on the slope to the music of a brassy band heard faintly across the stretch of water. The "wash" of the Richmond flutters aloft. A crack cutter shoots by leaning over like a skater, and skimming the smooth water like a seagull.

Sensations are of all kinds, and the connoisseur doubtless has his preferences.



For myself I know no sensuous beatitude equal to that to be realized in the stern-sheets of a cat-boat in Newport Harbor of a bright August afternoon. It is so exquisitely poised between anodyne and excitant. You must know how to "sail a boat," and though no great seamanship is implied in the competent management of a cat-boat, in which it is said only a lubber or an expert navigator ever comes to grief, there is enough of the unexpected to be considered to demand constant attention. A reasonably spirited horse requires less of his rider, when you remember the number of extraneities to be looked out for in a populous harbor, to say nothing of wind and weather eccentricities. You may have a party or not, but with your hand on the tiller, even in the serenest sailing it is the boat and the environment that furnish the acutest pleasure, to anyone of philosophic years at least.

VIII

THE TOWN IN WINTER

IN winter the town is still unique. The wealth of leafage has disappeared and the multitude of trees is even more noticeable in its bareness than in its clothed estate. It counts less as a restful and mysterious mass and emphasizes itself by its starkness. Myriads of sere and gray branches glisten in the bright sunshine and cast a network of shadow over the sidewalks and houses. Dusky spaces and rich boscages have given place to the staccato tenuity of arboreal anatomy—sharp accents everywhere instead of the soft toning of the deep green summer luxuriance. The quaint houses look in consequence insubstantial, tiny and isolated; the background in which they were set and into which they fitted so cosily is gone, and they stand out in somewhat in-

significant silhouette. One divines, however, the interior comfort of contented hibernation. Spring, summer, and "the season" are coming, and even in frame structures and in icy weather such a prospect is sufficiently sustaining. The macadam is rigid and furrowed by the frost. An occasional stretch of brick pavement oozes trickling rills at noonday. The long plank walks, interspersed with ash and clinker substitutes at recurrent intervals, echo crisply to an incredible distance the tread of a brisk pedestrian of a Sunday returning from church. The air is absolutely still. Sounds carry miraculously. One may hear a dog bark or a wagon rumble as if by telephone from a spot beyond identification.

After Thanksgiving and toward Christmas a silver sheen succeeds the autumn bloom as this in its time had overlaid the summer warmth and soft suffusions of color. On a brisk December day, which begins with ringing clearness and crispness, it takes the sun but an hour or

two to bring everything into a harmony, whose keynote, higher than at any other season here, is yet of a mellower brilliance than elsewhere in America at this time a similar temperature suffers. The lotos-eating season is over, plainly, yet there is the same agreeable absence of demand on any specific energies as in summer. The envelope of color—that delightful garment that Newport never puts off—is as evident to the senses as in mid-summer, though more silvery in quality, as I said. At noon there is positive warmth—a glow that one enjoys the more for feeling a little as if one had earned it, with other than the hot-house enervation born of whiffs of roses and orange trees and tempting one to forget the season instead of improve it that is characteristic of Cannes and San Raphael. The water is blue, beautifully blue, but of a hue more marked by crispness than suavity and full of character. There are no breakers, as earlier in the season, or as in and after foul weather, but the ceaseless folding over

and self-hemming of the long, tranquil waves in regular recurrence is eloquent to the eye, as their faint but voluminous sound is to the ear, of the steady pulsations of the Atlantic, beside which the plashing ripple of the Mediterranean seems special and occasional.

Over the eastern hill and out at Paradise the turf is grown dry and brown with the frost, yet the sense perceives that Nature is only sleeping, and notes an absence of that mortuary aspect which she wears at this season in New England generally. The summer delicacy of color has grown, in steady autumnal gradation, diaphanous to the verge of dreariness, but has stopped there without overstepping the line. The slopes and fields and stretching marshes are not grayed into desolation, but harbor here and there, in little dells and hollows, or even more minutely under the lee of hummocks and tufts of herbage, warm hues and hints of green, color evidences of life reminiscent of summer luxuriance, and softening

the austerity of the prospect with an undertone of deeper and richer hue. And in key with this background the wealth of Paradise cedars and junipers contribute their evergreen freshness and vitality, and attest the vigor of the deep-lying sap of Newport earth, the consciousness of whose presence prevents one from

> "———petting
> About the frozen time."

The sky, which always unites every detail under it into a pictorial composition in Newport, counts in winter more than ever in the fading competition of elements terrestrial. It is cloudless and of a soft cobalt hue during the early part of the day, if the sun be shining and if the curtain of gray mist and cold colorlessness, which of course, drops in winter with more frequency and less charm than in the summer season, be lifted. But noon once past, on these bright winter days, a soft glowing light creepingly suffuses the western sky, and is faintly reflected in the eastern firmament. The most delicate of yellow-

greens imaginable is quietly distributed as background, upon which purple cirrhus clouds speedily spread themselves in long, feathery plumes. Then the zenith becomes sapphire, flushed at the fringe with salmon and pink wreaths of vapor. Filaments of mauve stretch themselves in haphazard fret-work across the heavens. The eastern half of the vault takes on a pervasive rose-leaf tint of pink. Then, as the sun sinks and the temperature falls and twilight comes on, there is a sudden burst of deep-red, that fades out into infinitely long horizontal ribbons of orange; the zenith grows dull and declines in lead color; when finally the sun disappears beneath the rolling stretches of Conanicut, the clouds become more and more diaphanous and fade away into everlasting ether, that now shows itself unfathomable and austerely blue, with two or three stars just blinking themselves into the reach of human vision.

Walk down quaint and quaintly-called "Wanton Avenue"—an alley bordered

with picturesque and preposterous frame buildings, one inhabited by an old Newport "character;" the next a storeroom; the next a boat-house—and look out over the incomparable harbor at such an hour as this—the hour of a winter sunset with the shades of night drawing themselves slowly together over the lovely scene. The water is steel-blue—a hard and chilling light reflected from its fretful wavelets. White cat-boats and sloops anchored near by bob briskly with the desultory rise and fall of the breeze-roughened water. There are faint red lights struggling with the coming obscurity and the dying daylight on Goat Island. Fort Adams is a dark and not unromantic mass of sombre lateral extension. The cold has blended all colors into a harmony of frigid witchery. Familiar objects—the City Wharf, with an unloading coal-schooner alongside; Alger's and Groff's rickety piers; the vast white mass of an Old Colony steamboat lying next the end of Long Wharf; the chimney of the torpedo station on Goat

Island—take on a romantic aspect as the accidents of a purely artistic and immaterial *ensemble*. An hour or two later the boat leaves for New York. It is as hard to take it and leave this permanently enchanted spot, as if the season were midsummer.

The Town in Winter

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